1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

girl's parents with Rs. 15 and a pig as 'soup money'; these gifts represent the price of the soup given as special food to nursing mothers. Should he want the child and not its mother he must pay for both the *thip-song* and the 'soup money'. If the father is unknown or refuses to acknowledge his responsibility the girl's family performs the ceremony; at the end of the ceremony a tree is designated as the child's father; a wooden phallus is stuck into the trunk and it is then spat on and otherwise insulted by all present. The tree is meant to wither after the child's birth.

It is a very great disgrace for a girl to produce a bastard, and it is believed that possibly some girls somewhere bear their bastards in field-houses or the forest and kill them rather than confess to the act. I could get no concrete instances of this and the idea of infanticide is so appalling to Lepchas that they will not even willingly entertain the idea of its being practised by strangers. There is no known method of avoiding conception and the only abortifacient believed in, and that very half-heartedly, is the bathing in hot sulphurous streams which are found some distance away in Zongu.

When a bastard is born there is no gathering of friends and relations for the birth feast on the third day and a lama will not come to the house to cast the child's horoscope; instead either the child's or the girl's father must visit him. Apart from this the child is treated normally. Should the girl marry later the child will stay with its maternal grandparents and will be brought up as their child; it will be considered as a member of their *ptso*, and, if a boy, will have the same share in the heritable property as his maternal uncles. Although bearing a bastard is an act of the greatest shame, once it is over and done with no attempt is made to hide the matter or to hush it up. People will announce quite openly that they or their relations are bastards, or have born or begotten bastards; the shame situation has been successfully passed and is therefore no longer a cause for unpleasant feelings. Bastards are believed to suffer from one of three inherent weaknesses; either their mothers will die young, or their health will be bad, or they will suffer from goitre (three of the six supposed bastards of Lingthem have this complaint). Goitres are of two sorts; one of them is extremely lucky and productive of wealth and prosperity;[15]

[15] The seven men of Mayel (see Chapter Nine) who are the patrons of grain harvests are all said to have enormous goitres and as people sow the grain they murmur in prayer to them '*Ta-yoot thimbu : sambo thimbu*'—'May we have big goitres; may we have big harvests.'

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

843 carried is not *pék* other miscarriages will follow. A miscarriage is merely a dead child and has no sort of moral significance. It is possible that if a woman were pregnant by a bastard she would try to hide the miscarriage; this is *nam-toak* and she and her village will be punished with storms and hail which will destroy the crops.

[847] Except in the theoretical case of a girl being delivered of a bastard in the forest and there killing it, infanticide is not permitted for any reason whatsoever; neither monsters nor deformed infants nor even incestuously begotten children will be killed.

844 To procure easy delivery a Mun will offer two chickens to Sor *moong* in the seventh or eighth month of pregnancy. Easy or difficult labour is considered to be a hereditary quality; a woman who after easy deliveries suddenly has a difficult one is considered either to have helped a woman in child-birth who had difficult labour, or to have eaten some of the food of such a woman. If labour is difficult a Mun and lama will be called in to find out the cause of this, which is almost certain to be the breaking of some pre-natal taboo, probably by the father. If this is discovered by divination the appropriate steps will be taken to remove the *tamtoom* by the undoing or unlocking that which had been incorrectly completed

[845] or locked. It may be noted that it is impossible to procure an abortion or still-birth by the intentional breaking of pre-natal precautions; any such act which can kill the child will also kill the mother.

About a month before delivery is expected some specially strong *chi* is prepared and put aside; this must on no account be touched by anybody until the third day after delivery, when it is served at the birth feast; and, for a month after, it is given as a specially strengthening food to the newly delivered mother. Apart from this no special preparations are made for birth, which takes place in the husband's house; all the members of the household are present at the birth, but no strangers unless a Mun or lama has to be called in to give his services to help a difficult delivery. The mother is delivered in the kitchen; a rope is suspended from the ceiling to which she clings, squatting; she may be helped by the father or parents-in-law or anybody who knows how, who will squat behind and press on the woman's breasts and belly. As soon as the baby has appeared the cord is cut and the part attached to the baby tied up; then the baby is washed in luke warm water, wrapped in a cloth, and given the breast. Anybody who knows how can cut the navel-cord—the mother or father or anybody else who has

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the following are examples: *Ka-ka*, or *Ma-ma*—Don't; *A-ji*—Take care!; *Bum*—stay there.

Mrs. de Beauvoir Stocks mentions that "deformed children are instantly killed, the mother in a case of that sort being well treated by her husband but badly by her neighbours." But my information does not in any way confirm this wild generalisation. All my informants were horrified at the suggestion that Lepchas practised any form of infanticide. "Such a thing is never done," said Tafoor, "nor have I ever heard of it. Even a monster, such as might be the result of two near relatives marrying, would not be killed. The only case of this sort of which I have ever heard was when, many generations ago, a cow in Talung gave birth to a human child. The people were very frightened and killed it after a week."

In a community which desires children above all things, and in which no stigma attaches to illegitimacy, there would appear to be no reason for indulging in infanticide, and I am convinced that in Jongu it is absolutely unknown. In fairness to Mrs. Stocks, however (whose account is admittedly compiled from odds and ends of information gathered from all over the place), I should add that Miss Scott told me that amongst her Christian Lepcha community she notices a marked tendency for illegitimate children not to survive more than a very few months. If, however, this is due (as I imagine to be the case) to some form of infanticide—slow starvation, for instance, or general lack of care—it is one of the more unsatisfactory results of Mission influence, since members of the Church who give birth to illegitimate children are not looked upon with favour. Missionaries do a great deal of admirable work, but it is a great pity that the Church cannot see its way to compromise in the matters of polygyny and illegitimacy.

Contraception is not known amongst the Lepchas; nor does a woman take any action to induce a miscarriage when she knows that she is about to give birth to an illegitimate child: but in such circumstances should she miscarry she will say nothing about it.